

## STARK INTRODUCES AMERICARE

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — U.S. Representative Pete Stark (D-CA), Ranking Democrat on the Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, today introduced the "AmeriCare Health Care Act" with the support of U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and more than 25 of their colleagues. AmeriCare is a simple and practical proposal for universal health coverage that builds on both Medicare and the employer-based system.

"Debates on healthcare tend to occur every ten to fifteen years, when costs rise to a level that attracts national attention. As we edge closer to our next discussion, the fundamental question before us is if medical care is a civic and social right like police and fire services, education, and national defense," said Stark. "While Republicans are fixated on outlawing gay marriage, stem cell research, and flag burning, I am offering a new direction for health care in America. AmeriCare builds on Medicare, an efficient, popular, and successful program, to provide universal coverage with minimal disruption to our current system."

Under the "AmeriCare Health Care Act," people would either receive coverage through their employer or through AmeriCare, a new program modeled on Medicare. AmeriCare would provide preventive, physician, hospital, and mental health services, as well as maternity coverage and an affordable prescription drug benefit. It would also impose a limit on out-of-pocket costs.

AFL-CIO Director of Legislation Bill Samuel said: "Health care ranks among our members' greatest concerns — paying for it, keeping it, worrying about how to cope with medical bills if it is lost. The dismal trends in health care cost and coverage hit too close to home for working families. We have reached a crisis that demands bold initiatives. AmeriCare takes a thoughtful and sensible approach to provide all Americans with access to affordable, comprehensive, quality health coverage."

AmeriCare would provide additional benefits for children under age 24 and individuals with income less than 300 percent of the poverty level. Supplemental benefits could be offered by employers or purchased through private insurance companies. Sharing risk and responsibility, AmeriCare would be financed through contributions from employers, individuals, and states, all of whom pay into our current health care system.

“AmeriCare is a bold and thoughtful proposal that takes us down the most promising road to universal health insurance,” said Yale University Professor Dr. Jacob Hacker. “Rather than try to reinvent the wheel or upend parts of our present system that work, AmeriCare builds on employment-based insurance and the Medicare model to ensure that every American has access to a secure, affordable, and comprehensive health plan. This valuable legislation — which has the best chance of any proposal for universal coverage — could transform America for the better.”

Unlike the current system, AmeriCare would save billions of dollars by utilizing Medicare’s highly efficient administrative infrastructure. Whereas many private insurers devote more than 30 percent of funds for marketing, administration, and profit, Medicare operates on a two to three percent margin. AmeriCare would also require the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate with the pharmaceutical industry for reasonable prescription drug prices and expand the use of health information technology.

A one-page summary of the “AmeriCare Health Care Act” is available at [http://www.house.gov/stark/news/109th/pressreleases/american/american\\_](http://www.house.gov/stark/news/109th/pressreleases/american/american_)

[summary.pdf](#)

A section-by-section summary of the bill is available at [http://www.house.gov/stark/news/109th/pressreleases/american/american\\_](http://www.house.gov/stark/news/109th/pressreleases/american/american_)

[sections.pdf](#)